



MotherToBaby

Medications & More During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding  
Ask The Experts

Fact Sheet

by the **Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS)**

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## HPV Vaccine

In every pregnancy, a woman starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a baby with a birth defect. This is called her background risk. This sheet talks about whether exposure to the HPV vaccine may increase the risk for birth defects over that background risk. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your health care provider.

### ***What is HPV?***

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common infection that is transmitted by skin-to-skin sexual contact. HPV is not just one virus. There are over 200 different kinds of HPV.

It is thought that at least half of all people who are sexually active have been exposed to at least one type of HPV. Most people will have no symptoms of HPV infection and no related health problems.

However, some types of HPV do cause health problems. Some types of HPV can cause genital warts in men and women. Others can cause cancer of the cervix and vagina in women, cancer of the penis in men, and in both men and women, cancer of the mouth/throat and anus.

### ***If I have HPV, will that cause pregnancy problems?***

It is unclear. Even though HPV is common, it is not well-studied during pregnancy. More research is needed to know if having HPV increases the risks of pregnancy problems. Having HPV is not considered a medical reason to avoid pregnancy. At this time, HPV has not been associated with any increased risk of birth defects.

It is known that HPV can be passed to a newborn during pregnancy or through the birth canal. Usually this causes no problems for the newborn. In rare cases, a baby can develop warts in his throat that can cause breathing problems. This is a serious condition called juvenile onset recurrent respiratory papillomatosis (JORRP).

### ***What is the HPV vaccine?***

The HPV vaccine provides protection against some types of HPV. There are several different vaccines available. They currently protect against 4 to 9 of the HPV virus types. These vaccines do not contain a live virus. This means they are noninfectious and cannot give a person HPV.

The HPV vaccine is approved for males and females between the ages of 9 and 26 years of age. The vaccine provides the most protection when given before becoming sexually active.

### ***I just got the HPV vaccine, how long should I wait until I get pregnant?***

Since the HPV vaccine is noninfectious, there is no specific recommended waiting period before attempting to get pregnant.

### ***I am pregnant. Should I get the HPV vaccine?***

The HPV vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women because it is most effective prior to sexual contact and not well studied in pregnancy.

### ***I didn't know I was pregnant when I got the HPV vaccine. Could this harm my baby?***

Noninfectious vaccines are considered to be a low risk during pregnancy. Additionally, a small number of studies with the HPV vaccine found no increase in birth defects or pregnancy complications.

Until more information is known, it is recommended to wait until after pregnancy to complete any remaining HPV doses needed.

***Can I receive the HPV vaccine while breastfeeding?***

Yes. Noninfectious vaccines like the HPV vaccine are compatible with breastfeeding. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

***The father of the baby received the HPV vaccine around the time that I got pregnant. Is there a risk to the baby?***

No. There is no evidence that vaccines given to men will affect the sperm. In general, exposures that fathers have are unlikely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures and Pregnancy at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/>.

**Please click here to view references.**

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